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AUGUST 8, 1980

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Fifty years on

The TLS of August 7, 1930, reviewed a biography of Henry Green, *The Witches of Wall Street*, by Joyden Sparkes and Samuel Taylor Moore. It is seldom that a book appeals equally to the financier, the psychologist, the moralist and the general reader; but this fourfold attraction will certainly be exercised by the biography of Henry Green, if she had been, remarkable for nothing else, her conspicuous success as an investor would have been enough to claim the attention of everyone who is interested in Stock Exchange transactions. Mr. Sparkes and Mr. Moore, who are acquainted with a small child in the house of a New Bedford, Mass., she used to read aloud to her grandfather, whose slight, was falling, the financial news in the daily paper.

While still a young woman she inherited a large fortune, which she had the skill to use as the nucleus of even greater wealth. She let no opportunity pass that could be turned to profitable account. For example, she spent the early period of her married life in England and

ing of young children, she made more than \$1,250,000 through judicious purchases of United States bonds. Returning to America about the time of the panic of 1929, she reaped a beautiful harvest from other people's misfortunes, buying on a large scale when the market price of shares and bonds had touched bottom. Henry Green's biographers seem to be justified in their remark that no other woman has ever been so successful in the management of a fortune. The net result of her uncanny financial ability was that between 1885 and 1916—the thirty-one years of her life—she had acquired a fortune of \$25,000,000 to more than \$100,000,000.

So much for Henry Green as a financier. But if she was the richest woman in America—probably in the world—she was also far and away the sanest. Here her character, the unusual meter for a study in moral psychology. She went about in the middle of the century, and on very cold days used to

moved from one cheap hotel or obscure lodging to another in order to avoid the tax collector. When she could cash her checks in a bank in her room, throw the bucket of water and then to down stairs and spread it on the grass. She could judge free advice from doctors and lawyers by on-the-spot. When her son had an accident to his knee-cap she put on the dress and went to the hospital to see him to a charity clinic. It must be added that this personification of stinginess was totally unselfish in matters where money was not concerned. In a bookish house she would carry down to the kitchen to save the stove the trouble of climbing a ladder, or a bank porter with a bag, or a hack driver with a cough could be sure of her sympathy and her active help as long as that help

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The army of the peacemakers

By Kenneth O. Morgan

MARTIN CEADEL: *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: the Defining of a Faith*. 342pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £12.50. 0 19 821892 6

The road of the pacifist has been a rocky one in this distant century. From Agadir to Afghanistan, the pacifist has usually been cursed rather than blessed. In Britain during the present century, the pacifist has offered the simplest targets for derision by the "realist". They can easily be depicted as a miscellaneous, sectarian group of Utopian fanatics. George Orwell's caricature of the typical Leftist could be easily applied to the archetypal pacifist as well—a prim little man, usually a secret testator and often with vegetarian leanings, with a history of nonconformity behind him, and above all, with a sense of duty, he has no intention of forcing, with a long list of "fads" from health foods to Women's Lib.

British pacifism, in fact, has been more often derided than described, let alone subjected to scholarly examination. And yet it is transparently clear that these caricatures, even anarchistic rebels, frequently provide a major theme in our political and intellectual history. In the futurist aftermath of the First World War, in the various guises, in the inter-war years, in the European dictatorships, above all in providing an important ingredient in the concept of "appeasement", the British pacifists from the No-Conscription Fellowship in 1914 to the Peace Pledge Union in 1936, were an influential element in politics. Indeed, ex post facto rationalization by politicians and journalists since 1939 has led to a serious underestimation of the extent and impact of British pacifism. In its various guises, in the inter-war years, in the European dictatorships, above all in providing an important ingredient in the concept of "appeasement", the British pacifists from the No-Conscription Fellowship in 1914 to the Peace Pledge Union in 1936, were an influential element in politics. Indeed, ex post facto rationalization by politicians and journalists since 1939 has led to a serious underestimation of the extent and impact of British pacifism. In its various guises, in the inter-war years, in the European dictatorships, above all in providing an important ingredient in the concept of "appeasement", the British pacifists from the No-Conscription Fellowship in 1914 to the Peace Pledge Union in 1936, were an influential element in politics. Indeed, ex post facto rationalization by politicians and journalists since 1939 has led to a serious underestimation of the extent and impact of British pacifism.

A detailed study of this crucially important theme has long been needed. It has been metably achieved in Martin Ceadel's new monograph. It is lucidly written and amply documented, including the full use of interviews: recourse to the sources is much aided by the fact that the sources have been printed in the proper chronological order, both on excellent typology of a radical movement and a precise record of the evolution of an idea and a faith. It is, indeed, a most beautiful and invigorating first book by a young scholar, one which others can only hope to emulate. The book is a work of broad scope, attitudes towards war and peace beyond the relatively narrow confines of the pacifist movement. He portrays an entertaining gallery of eccentrics, treated equally if never cynically—Alan and Lansbury, Russell and Binsted, Aylen and Joad, A. A. Milne and Sylvia Jameson, Beverley Nichols and Vera Brittain, Aldous Huxley and Middleton Murry, Dick Sheppard and Max Plowman. He also provides a valuable compendium of the history of anti-war movements, religious, political or humanitarian, which depicts the course of British public life from 1914 onwards. But this is far more than a collection of fragments or a bundle of anecdotes. It lays bare the essence of a movement, its many-sided tradition, one that helped shape political assumptions in crucial respects during the 1920s and 1930s, and one whose message is still far from irrelevant to the age of the Cruise missile and the Trident. In more ways than one, this is indeed a necessary book.

Pacifism in Britain is essentially the study of an idea, rather than a political history. Dr Ceadel is particularly engaged in defining the quality of pacifism as an ideology, the quality of national life in the face of national disaster. It is not a study of "peace" movements in general, or of attitudes towards

war and violence as such—and what A. J. P. Taylor has termed "pacifism", on a very but necessary word to define the creed of those concerned with opposing particular wars and their origins. It is the distinction between the absolutist faith of the Fellowship of Reconciliation or the No-Conscription Fellowship (both formed in the early months of war in 1914) and the internationalism of the League of Nations Union or the Peace Ballot. The First World War, as this book shows (and as has also been demonstrated in Keith Robbins's excellent *The Abolition of War*, 1976) gave British pacifism an intellectual and political thrust for the first time. Indeed, the very word "pacifism" was a twentieth-century invention. The war gave a new impetus to religious pacifism, fuelled by the pressures to which conscientious objectors were subjected from early 1916. It also gave rise to a new form of socialist pacifism, whose moral commitment to universal brotherhood was fired anew by the revolution in Russia.

Neither of these survived as a particularly influential movement. Rather, it was "pacifism" which was the main beneficiary of the revolution against war after 1919. Even an anti-war poet like Sassoon was essentially a "pacifist" rather than a pacifist. But the distinctive pacifist tradition endured, both in religious movements like the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and in the essentially socialist No More War Movement. In the early 1930s, with the advent of Hitler, it looked as if British pacifism as an idea might disintegrate entirely. Some of its leading socialist advocates became revolutionary or anarchist. Other pacifists filtered into the internationalist "pacifism" of the League of Nations Union and embraced economic sanctions. Then pacifism was given an enormous stimulus in the mid and later 1930s by the personal commitment offered by Dick Sheppard and the Peace Pledge Union. It survived as a powerful force until the coming of war. Indeed, measured in terms of adherents, it recorded its zenith (136,000) in April 1940.

Even so, it is clear that pacifism in all its intellectual forms outlasted the war, and that the logical inconsistency, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that it attracted some of the outstanding minds of the day, Russell and Blunt, took included.

Of the three main forms as defined by Ceadel—Christian, socialist and humanist—Christian pacifism suffered from godless uncertainties over the precise exegesis of the Biblical message about killing and war. Christians were divided, too, over whether war was in fact the ultimate moral degradation to afflict mankind, and over the role of pacifism in the League of Nations. In the League of Nations, the borderlines between the realm of Cosmo and of God. Again, Christian pacifism based itself on the "immanent" rather than the transcendent view of God, and that presupposed God's presence throughout the secular world. This was a theological position that became increasingly untenable to the wake of the writings of Barth and Niebuhr in the late 1930s.

Socialist pacifism, for its part, always tended to merge into collaboration with the wider labour movement. Peace became a priority, though not a goal. In the fragments of the League of Nations, it was largely killed socialist pacifism. Bertrand Russell himself noted how often "in the maelstrom of violent revolution" was applauded to the echo. Humanist pacifism, based on a rejection of the First World War, was always plagued by fears about isolationism and was inclined to merge into political attempts to create a new world war. Long before 1945, in fact, the internal contradictions of each brand of pacifism had largely destroyed it. For many of its continuing adherents, like CND later, perhaps, pacifism had become more an expression of internal protest and a political rejection of conventional values than an idea compelling and convincing in its own right.

of an idea. The 1914-18 war gave pacifism a new institutional base, especially with the shock impact of universal male conscription in 1916. It merged into the new Liberal-Labour critique which rejected the war and the peace settlements that followed. At this time pacifism was essentially non-political. When new religious quietist, George Lloyd Davies, was actually elected to parliament as a Christian pacifist member for the University of Wales in 1923, he found the practical choices that he confronted as an MP far too taxing for his conscience. (It may be added that he had to make a further compromise, since he actually took the Labour whip in the House even though he had campaigned previously as a non-party independent.) While pacifism clung on in the 1920s, primarily in such elderly groups as the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Quakers, it survived as a basis for the new quest for world order in the inter-war period of the early 1930s. The advent of Hitler, far from encouraging pacifism, as it actually stimulated a ground swell in favour of a moral rejection of war. For a time its leading propagandist was Dr C. E. M. Joad, a poor man's Bertrand Russell, whose intellectual gyrations have never been exposed more effectively.

The pacifist movement was now far too diverse to disappear; the impact of Dick Sheppard's messianic leadership gave it an impetus it had long required. The very ineffectiveness of the League of Nations in the Abyssinian and other crises encouraged faith in a more personal, more direct form of the rejection of violence.

Halfway houses, like the idea of an international supervisory police force or Richard Gregg's Gandhi-like doctrine of non-violent resistance, were rejected in the face of Sheppard's public appeal. The Peace Pledge Union, formed in 1934—a direct practical outgrowth of the doctrine of pacifism—was the only anti-war movement of its time. It commanded the allegiance of writers such as Middleton Murry, Vera Brittain and Rose Macaulay, and of religious leaders like Canon David Lewis, Westminster. Necessarily, largely middle-class in composition, mainly academics, clergymen, writers and others with professional independence, it had a broad appeal. It was over talented young men, such as Geoffrey Frost, Henry Pelling and T. Dan Smith, even if some less agreeable figures were brought in, antisemitism and proto-fascist like the Duke of Bedford, the PPU added depth and passion to the popular pacifist movement. Indeed, Munich itself saw a powerful boost to the Union, whose membership rose by over 3,000 in the three months September-November 1938. New recruits included idealists like Maude Royden, who denounced the League of Nations Union in favour of absolute pacifism at this time. The PPU, "sheep without a shepherd" since the sudden death of its founder at the end of 1937, remained a powerful force. Not until May 1940 and the end of the "phoney war" did it begin to disintegrate.

Thereafter, its surviving members were always embarrassed advocates of half-hearted non-combat involvement in the war. They were aware that many of their intellectual premises had been blown away, and that the League of Nations, which had been far more numerous in the Second World War than in the first (50,000 as opposed to 16,500), pacifism in 1939-45 was as detached from wider progressive movements as it had been involved with the peace movement. Many of the pacifists took the form of individual rejection of modern mass society altogether, as in the case of rural communities of Middleton Murry or Eric Gill's Morriston vision of medieval craftsmanship. The groundswell of pacifism had become a broad, loose, and uncoordinated movement, but created only a sect.

The story of British pacifism, unfolded here is, of course, one of failure, perhaps even of inglorious failure. Many of its leading figures left the movement amidst some personal acrimony. Others, like the

pacifist, G. M. H. Davies, a solemn man who suffered for his faith in two world wars, ended his days as a voluntary patient in a north Wales mental hospital; finally, in 1949, he hanged himself. The impact of the pacifist conscience upon national, let alone international, events, had been slight indeed. Well might Hitler or Stalin—or, indeed, Churchill—ask how many divisions Dick Sheppard could summon up.

It is all an easy to point out the limitations of the pacifist bodies of the 1914-45 period. Ceadel provides a rich catalogue of inconsistencies, half-truths or plain absurdities. *Peace News* could urge in 1930 that the cure for war was to establish universal nursery schools for all children aged two to seven. Max Plowman in 1936 could declare, "It is premature to have a policy: we can only desire peace." There were almost comic ideas like the Peace Army, destined for Shanghai, to place itself, like Lytton Strachey in his famous ambiguous reply, between the contending Japanese and Chinese troops. There were mad visions like Dick Sheppard's I dreamt that George Lansbury and I were playing tennis against Hitler and Mussolini. George had a game leg and I was battalistic, but we won six-love. Many of the figures quoted here appear to have turned to pacifism as a result of unhappy marriages, ill-health or misfortune in their chosen professions. Aldous Huxley's pacifism arose from his efforts to combat insomnia and his search for a mystical union of all religious beliefs. Arthur Pinsonby linked pacifism with accounts of theories on the subjective nature of perception of the passing of time. Middleton Murry, in some ways the most exotic of all, turned to pacifism in part because he was the victim of husband-battering during the insane tempests of his ferocious third wife. "Since he would not fight his wife, he would not fight the fascists either," Ceadel remarks. Similarly, Murry's quest for peace was tinged with the Nazi in 1939 appears to have paralleled his personal disunity between his Anglo-Irish spouse and his latest mistress. No wonder Donald Super once described his fellow pacifists to the author as "an odd lot."

In short, pacifism can be explained away, on the analogy of Hofstadter's version of Populism or Progressivism or David Donald's of the Abolitionists in America, as the product of psychological and irrational factors, status insecurity, inner tension, sexual frustration and the like. But to be so dismissive would be totally unfair. The study's admirably balanced and fair-minded account is careful to avoid that pitfall, though the unwary reader may not be aware of it. In Britain in the inter-war period, were not a detached exercise in logical positivism carried out in the hothouse atmosphere of a university seminar. They were a matter of emotion, passion and values, set against a world in turmoil and almost unrecognisable in pre-1914 terms. One could compile an equally alarming list of foolish diagnoses from the apostles of Chamberlainite orthodoxy (Ceadel quotes one from Huxley and many more could be added to the list) from the followers of Churchill torn between patriotism and anti-Communism, from Lloyd George and from the equivocating leaders of the Labour Party. No group had a monopoly of wisdom or consistency in the peace struggle; none can take comfort from the afterthought.

In the end, the fact that followed, culminating in the holocaust of Hiroshima, was nearer to fulfilling the lurid prophecies of the discredited pacifists. They were individual protesters or rebels, unlinked to group activity. They were mostly apologetic figures cast into a complex collaborative world. But the moral thrust of their faith in the triumph of "love over power", in Vera Brittain's words, is worthy of being distinguished and examined. To the late Dame Vera Brittain, the daughter of a distinctly non-pacifist "troublemaker", as she and of perhaps her best book, in which the melancholy story of thirty years of inconsequential religious and dynamic involvement is unfolded. "They loved their lives and have not since."

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